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## Symposium on Television Violence Colloque sur la violence à la télévision

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PROBLEMS OF ALTERNATIVES AND  
PRODUCTION DIVERSITY\*

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\*one of a series of papers prepared by the following researchers:

David Balcon	Catherine Richards
Michèle Baril	Roger Richer
Normand Gamache	Susan Schachter
John Horvath	Janet Solberg
Diane Labrecque	Nigel Weir
James Mitchell	Mary Wilson

Views expressed in these papers do not necessarily reflect those of the Canadian Radio-Television Commission

Available in English only

Donald Gordon Centre, Queens University, Kingston, Ont.

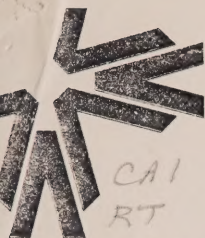
Canadian Radio-Television  
Commission

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Television was introduced to North Americans with the promise that it would provide a "Window on the World", literally delivering events and programs from around the world. What it has delivered on this promise is open to interpretation. There are drama series and musical productions, and at certain periods during the day newsfilm from various corners of the world. But real diversity on this global level would appear to be at conflict with the principles of commercial broadcasting. It now seems to be a function better left to pure public-supported networks which do not require the same consistent mass audience for programming that advertisers demand from commercial networks. On the other hand, these same economic considerations have created a centralized, and highly efficient production plant based in Los Angeles which turns out yearly over 1500 prime-time hours of film, and video-taped mass-oriented drama series each year for American domestic and world-wide consumption.

In Canada, the CRTC Canadian content regulations aid in creating diversity, by specifying how much Canadian programming must be broadcast by a licensee. Other Commission decisions have emphasized regional contributions to both the CBC and CTV television networks. But these have only partially reduced the natural dominance of US-





-produced programming, and especially highly-intensive drama productions for prime-time, and the low-budget celebrity-oriented strip game and talk shows in off-network periods.

Even without cable, millions of Canadians in Toronto, Hamilton, Montreal and Vancouver, can and do watch American television stations, and their American programs. This has led network planners to see that CTV is not really competing for audiences any longer with just the CBC, but rather with the encroaching three US commercial networks. Prime-time television on the CBC, CTV and Global networks is disproportionately dominated by American programs, some 42 series appearing on these three Canadian networks will be American, two will be British. The former represents over two-thirds of the American networks' offerings in prime-time being duplicated on Canadian television.\*

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\* A breakdown of the Toronto market in late 1974 reflected this situation extremely well. 70 percent of all programs that could be viewed on the eight major VHF stations (five Canadian and three American) were of US origin, 25 percent were Canadian, and just under five percent British. In order to keep advertising dollars on Canadian stations there is a need to program in direct competition with the American networks, meaning either simulcast or



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A second factor is more universal. American culture is a pre-sold commodity. The ties with Britain that once seemed to dominate the cultural life of English Canada have all but vanished with the advent of television. American culture has become an international phenomenon, conceived not as "culture" but as a product of business enterprise, to be sold domestically and exported abroad, like any other American consumer product. The spread of culture after World War II was no longer due exclusively political-colonial factors, but became related to industrial forces.

In the television realm, a key decision came in the late 1950s with the networks deciding to get out of television program production themselves and to invite independent production companies to conceive and make series for a fixed price.\* Film, therefore became the new production

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pre-release of as many US television series as is possible. This tends to increase the amount of US programming visible during the key revenue-producing prime-time periods. While there is already some "give" in the schedules to provide for Canadian content requirements, programming a series from any other country, such as Great Britain, can cause problems of competition for programmers.



format of television, rather than the live broadcasts which audiences had come to identify as "television".

Not that live television would disappear entirely, but as Hollywood began entering the picture, teleseries quickly displaced cheaper forms of shows like game and musical-variety shows. Without video tape, film was the only recording medium available. And within years the motion picture studios were producing more hours of television than motion pictures. The studios retained international rights to their shows and used their international distribution networks to place American teleseries on newly-emerging networks through-out the world. Canada, Britain and various European countries were producing television programming to fill their own schedules, but virtually all was "live" and much in the entertainment range, unexportable in most cases because of its localized content, or the poor quality of kinescopic recording methods. Thus the US began its long-time domination of

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\* Television networks produced programs since few others were convinced the risks in the fledgling industry were worth taking. NBC and CBS both had interests in companies manufacturing television sets (as did the now-defunct Dumont network), and programs gave people





television program export which it continues to maintain today.

In 1974, UNESCO published a study on the international flow of television programs which confirmed the overwhelming US domination of that trade. Entitled "Television traffic - a one-way street?" it graphically showed the effect of this dominance, not so much in the countries of Europe or in Canada, but in the shaping of television development elsewhere.<sup>1</sup> Based on figures for the early seventies, US yearly exports reaching 150,000 hours, compared with some 20,000 hours each for Britain and France, and 6,000 hours for Germany. Nearly 75 percent of the American figure was destined to Latin and South America, Africa and Asia. Each of the three other countries tended to sell most of their programming in areas where they once had colonies, and where there were in language and culture historical similarities. These reasons applied less to the US markets

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a reason for buying television sets. Live production also encouraged new local stations to purchase large studio facilities, again from companies like RCA, NBC Television's parent company. This "loss leader" approach had worked for these same networks with radio,





U.S. programs tended to be of a nature that the language barrier was surmountable since these series relied on action/adventure rather than on heavy dialog and convoluted plots. This made entry into countries with low literacy rates quite easy for American producers; indeed many countries select programs on the basis that they could be understood by their average twelve year-olds.

This also meant that American television was no longer "television". It was a dollar-intensive motion picture form based on the principle that high costs would pay off should a series become successful and run for several years on a given US network, then be sold into syndication at home (such as was the case with I LOVE LUCY or BONANZA) and to other countries. Much the same principle was used

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and would work again with television. Initially in Canada, Britain and Europe, television, like radio before it, was seen as being too powerful a medium to be left to commercial interests, and its development and programming was given to the public radio networks already in existence. In the United States, the two



in motion pictures by the same studios, losing money on two or three features for every success. Thus success was based on the kind of volume production, unique to the American entertainment industry.

While many countries bought this type of programming Canada was even more affected. In its early fifties, the CBC established a microwave link with the US networks to feed newsfilm and a number of live variety series. Canada was a "customer" even in the "live" days of television. As filmed series picked up momentum, and began to dominate other types of programming, Canada became a prime market with fast returns for US producers. The introduction of private independent and network TV stations in the late fifties and early sixties made Canada more valuable as a market. Canada is the single largest market in the world

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principle networks successfully sold the American public on television, but realized that plant facilities needed to expand schedules would be beyond their immediate interests. Having settled the earlier quarrel with the motion picture industry, the decision was made to use Hollywood's plant and experienced personnel to





for U.S. television programming. While most other countries purchased their US series a season or two after initial release to assure themselves of a full season of at least 36 episodes, Canadian purchasers gambled that a new series would be successful on US networks and be renewed beyond 13 weeks. Further re-enforcing the power of American programs was the continual flow of publicity on their "stars" in the popular press, and even in Canadian TV supplements. On technical grounds, Canada's decision to adopt the American NTSC colour television system, and a 525-line standard, made for off-air integration of US border stations into the Canadian broadcasting system. At the same time, this made the importation of video-taped series from Britain and Europe costly, if impossible well into the nineteen sixties.

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produce new types of series which would allow drama to leave behind the "parlour" and enter into "the real world". With a total control over what would be bought and how much would be paid, the networks opened the floodgates to film, and with that, altered the complexion of American television and television





Of the few British series to be seen on English Canadian television during this period, almost all were produced on film, ranging from suspense drama series like THE AVENGERS to documentaries from the BBC. Only within the past five years has any large scale marketing of video taped drama, starting with THE FORSYTE SAGA, become technically practical. In the meantime, ATV in Britain did seize on what became known as the "mid-Atlantic" teleseries. Produced on film, these were uniquely British in the sophistication of script, but quite American in the execution of action. In later years, American stars were added to the formula to entice the US networks to make a first-run purchase, but success was limited and pressures from US craft unions too intense to realize any substantial breakthrough. While this hindered their full-scale appearance in North America, for a short period they did enjoy a considerable success in Canada where

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elsewhere in the world.

1. Television Traffic - A one-way street?, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, Paris, 1974.



such series as SECRET AGENT, THE SAINT and THE PRISONER could still be counted as "Commonwealth" and not affect any domestic quota situation for broadcasters. However, in 1970 the CRTC's revised Canadian content regulations withdrew this exemption.\*

#### French-language Television in Canada

Such a situation did not occur in French-speaking Canada, language and a distinct culture resisting American cultural exports. This made popular, mass entertainment drama forms such as the téléroman -- a type of teleseries ranging from situation comedy through to high-quality melodrama -- culturally and economically viable for both the commercial network TVA and Radio Canada to produce. Diversity in foreign-produced acquisitions was also kept high and not dominated by any one country. Series

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\* Canadian programs on British television, however, are treated as domestic and last March four such series were running in the London area on Thames and London Weekend television: THE SWISS FAMILY ROBINSON, a CTV co-production with Trident Television, KRESKIN, POLICE SURGEON, and ADVENTURES IN RAINBOW COUNTRY.





and single programs from Italy, France, Belgium, Switzerland, West Germany and even Britain were more easily integrated into schedules. This relationship with European networks and producers has also meant that Radio Canada was more involved in the programming activities of the European Broadcasting Union (EBU), participating in co-productions of all sorts with member networks. And while American series have been dubbed into French, they have not reached the levels equivalent to those on English-language television. In fact, the two French-language networks last season presented more British programming than the two major English ones. In this respect, Radio Canada is closer to the European model than to other North American networks (with perhaps the exception of PBS and Ontario's educational network OECA).

Faced with realities of high program costs and limited national budgets, 27 networks in 22 countries formed a programming exchange and co-production system, EBU. Britain and West Germany are the principal contributors to Eurovision, as the system is popularly known. As a clearing house, EBU provides what one member called the





"very best coverage of world events for all European viewers". On this level, daily newsfilm and sports coverage are the most visible results of Eurovision. But transmission of drama and music productions often draw equally large audiences, and the annual EUROVISION SONG CONTEST is the largest single European television event. The greatest value of such a system is that it is not dominated by a single form, or source, of television programming, and that its range is a true model of the diversity promised by the "Window on the World". In 1969, EBU members contributed 951 hours of programming, exclusive of daily newsfeeds. Britain used 325 hours of Eurovision programming, while Italy aired 315 hours. In a situation similar to the much-talked about choice of channels which are available to Toronto cable subscribers, Belgium is geographically situated to receive ten channels from five countries, including two domestic. But in terms of non-duplication of programs, the Belgium situation is far more advanced than that of Toronto's, with diversity ranging through source, type and content of programming.

Diversity may also be reflected in the purchase of motion pictures for Canadian television. Like off prime-time



syndicated television shows, motion pictures are purchased in bulk, principally from major US distributors. In English Canada this means that most films are US in origin with the occasional British feature added. Both CBC and CTV have followed Global television's lead and purchased a portion of the limited supply of Canadian features available. However, before this only Radio Canada had made any real commitments to domestic cinema. The two French networks continue to present a wide range of films from many of countries. But Radio Canada's CINECLUB goes beyond this to air a representative yearly sample of films from well over fifteen countries. Since features are bought by the CBC's English network stations rather than by the network itself, the variety of countries represented will result from a local decision to feature "foreign films" as is done with directors festivals, specific genres and star performers. CTV and the private English independents specialize more in American made-for-television movies or major television-release of American features.

#### Diversity by Program Forms

If there is a lack of diversity by country-of-origin in weekly series television on the English-language networks,



there is a similar lack of diversity in the actual form of those imported series. Commercial strategies again may militate against diversity. Last season, for example, in prime-time on the three US commercial networks there were only three music/variety shows of a total of 63 series. This form has become difficult for the networks to use in gaining large audiences, with the fragmentation of musical tastes between rock, middle of the road and country music. The idea of mixing performers of all types of music has been less than successful. This has relegated music programs to a summer replacement status or to a specialized audience role, aired in off peak hours when the younger viewer is offered shows like MIDNIGHT SPECIAL or ROCK CONCERT.

Prime time network television in the US is dominated by popular, mass drama forms. Sixteen situation comedies and twenty-three "law enforcement" series in the 1974/75. Since US television is dominated by these program types, Canadian schedules tend to fall in line. Domestic production, with a somewhat clearer guideline for diversity of forms and public service, and somewhat underfinanced to attempt equivalent types of dramatic programs, finds itself producing less-costly alternatives: Game shows in prime-time, current affairs, documentaries and music





series. Such production decisions on the part of network executives, however, further act to limit the import of these latter types of programs from foreign sources, principally because of their direct relationship with Canadian content requirements. (Appendix 2 illustrates this with relation to the CTV Television Network and CBC's English-language service.)

Recently, with more broadcast outlets in Canada, the question of program supply has arisen, something which has perhaps inadvertently increased the diversity of program sources offered to some Canadians. The reason for this is rather straight forward: There is not enough first-run American product available. Forced to look elsewhere, series like THE ONEIDEN LINE, SPECIAL BRANCH and ON THE BUSES are now getting exposure in areas like southern Ontario. And from further afield, Australian series like THE ROVERS and NUMBER 96 have made their appearance. (See Appendix 3).

In the United States, for different reasons, the influence of British television programming has increased. PBS network service is dominated by British drama and documentary productions plus comedies like MONTY PYTHON's



FLYING CIRCUS. There are simply not the resources in U.S. public television to underwrite such programming. NBC has just finished running THE ZOO GANG and CBS, MOSES THE LAWGIVER, both from Britain's ATV. And while not being sold by the network route, ATV's SPACE: 1990 has picked up hundreds of US sales by stations who have now decided to run the series in prime-time, dropping at least one of their network-supplied series. PBS has consistently drawn its largest audiences with London Weekend's UPSTAIRS, DOWNSTAIRS and Granada Television's A FAMILY AT WAR. CBS has committed itself to an adaption of UPSTAIRS, DOWNSTAIRS for this season, and if BEACON HILL proves successful, it could mean a return to this form of studio, video taped television drama. Such has already been the case with Norman Lear's adapting of the BBC's UNTIL DEATH US DO PART to ALL IN THE FAMILY, which moved series television drama out of the film format for situation comedy.

It can be seen that, as filmed series costs escalate and syndication becomes a riskier proposition with fewer original episodes per season being committed for by the networks, American television may be slowly moving back to a more economical form of "television", long the norm





for network production here in Canada and Europe. This may help in eliminating the "film barrier" put up by Hollywood, and equalize production opportunities for countries like Canada.

#### "Authentic" Diversity

Worth consideration are the inherent characteristics of such British series like THE SWEENEY, MAIN CHANCE and comedies like MAN ABOUT THE HOUSE and the DOCTOR...series, and CORONATION STREET. As with those previously mentioned, all closely reflect British life and tastes. Without the compromise that foreign sales and co-production often appear to dictate, their uniqueness has become one of their most saleable aspects.

Such a situation, however, has arisen only through providing a domestic production industry with sufficient funding to produce such undertakings without compromise. This has been reinforced by the realization that television is the strongest cultural force in modern society for the shaping of both attitudes and role models, backed up by research findings indicating that viewing audiences more and more perceive the world of television fiction



as the real world.

In its amiable diversity of television forms of programming, the Canadian broadcasting system has overlooked one of the most important of these forms: Television drama, and in particular, mass audience popular drama. The CBC itself will produce three hours of drama for the coming fall season, half of which will be mandatory for all affiliates to carry. Three half-hours will be competitive with US styles, the rest will be more traditional anthology types. CTV will present a single, half-hour situation comedy. Canadians will be exposed to over twenty drama series each week on the two networks, but of these thirty or so, less than fifteen per cent will be portraying their shared experience; 85 percent will be portraying a foreign way of life, dominated by police, detectives, lawyers, doctors, con men and criminals.

The indictment may not be that Canadians do not watch Canadian programs, but rather that Canadians are not being allowed to choose the types of programs they actually wish to watch. The viewer is forced to view



US-produced drama series, and in most cases to watch drama series which are dominated by a law enforcement system that may not relate to this country.





# Appendix 1

A comparison of program types as displayed  
in comparing Canadian, United States and  
British prime-time network television block  
schedules (Based on sample week, Oct. '74)



## Appendix 2

Source and program form diversity on the  
CBC English-language network and the CTV  
Television network for the fall 1975 season  
in Prime Time (7 p.m. to 11.20 p.m.)

CANADIAN BROADCASTING CORPORATION*									
<u>"Popular Commercial" Range (2/3rds)</u>					<u>"Public Service" Range (1/3rd)</u>				
	12			Canada	10 (excl.news)				
	11			United States	nil				SOURCES by
	1			Britain	nil				<u>units per week**</u>
	Can	US	UK		Can	US	UK		
Pop drama/ anthology	4	10	1	News	7 (inapplicable)				
				CurAffairs	5	nil	nil		FORMS by
Music/ variety	9	1	nil	Docum	1	nil	nil		<u>units per week**</u>
Sports	1	nil	nil	Consumer	2	nil	nil		
				Serious Music	1	nil	nil		

CTV TELEVISION NETWORK									
<u>"Popular Commercial" Range</u>					<u>"Public Service" Range</u>				
	7			Canada	2 (excl.news)				
	20			United States	nil				SOURCES by
	nil			Britain	nil				<u>units per week**</u>
	Can	US	UK		Can	US	UK		
Pop drama/ anthology	1	18	nil	News	7 (inapplicable)				FORMS by
				CurAffairs	2	nil	nil		<u>units per week**</u>
Music/ variety	6	1	nil	Docum	occassional from all three				
Sports	1	nil	nil						
Movies	nil	2	nil						

\* The CBC's airtime split between Entertainment revenue-producing programs, and more public service sustaining undertakings is roughly two-thirds for the former, one-third for the latter. All CTV programming is available for purchase by advertisers, therefore no such split is possible.

\*\* A program unit may be defined as one individual program of any length.





### Appendix 3

British programming aired on Canadian television stations during calendar years 1974 and 1975 (to July) -- Source: CRTC Broadcast Programs Branch

#### CTV Network and Affiliates

The Sweeney	Full CTV Network
My Wife Next Door	

The Persuaders	Locally by Affiliates
Please Sir	
Window Britain	
Rupert	
Snow Goose	
Napoleon and Love	
Survival	
The Protectors	
The Champions	

#### Global Television Network

Doctor In The House  
Doctor At Sea  
Follyfoot  
Shoulder to Shoulder  
Joker's Wild  
Special Branch  
Callan  
Upstairs, Downstairs  
Van der Valk

#### Independents

Conjugal Rights  
Helen: A Woman of Today  
Benny Hill  
Soccer  
On the Buses  
Main Chance  
Love of Ada  
The Saint  
And Mother Makes Three  
Father, Dear Father  
KGB

#### Canadian Broadcasting Corporation

##### Network and Owned & Operated Stations

America  
Civilization  
Monty Python's Flying Circus  
Wide World of Animals  
Dangerman  
Coronation Street  
The Protectors  
Billy Liar

Oneiden Line  
Some Mothers Do 'ave Em  
Man About The House  
Flaxton Boys  
Colditz  
The Pallisers  
Children's Cinema  
The World At War



Appendix 4

Breakdown by program forms of RAI  
(Italian) and CBC English and French  
television networks -- Source: RAI  
and CBC annual reports 1974

	RAI*	CBC English	CBC French	CBC Average**
News and information	45.1%	51.1%	27.8%	39.5%
Ligh entertainment and drama	15.0%	32.8%	56.6%	44.7%
Arts, letters and science	19.3%	7.9%	5.5%	6.7%
Sports and outdoors	10.6%	8.2%	10.1%	9.1%

\* 10% of RAI programs are not classified

\*\* CBC figures are based on weekly schedule  
averages







